

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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TAGS: SOPN EC
SUBJ: MEDIA REACTION TO PRESIDENT'S OAS SPEECH

1. REACTION TO PRESIDENT CARTER'S OAS SPEECH IN THE ECUADOREAN MEDIA HAS BEEN BOTH MINIMAL AND NEGATIVE. ONLY ONE EDITORIAL APPEARED, A SECONDARY EDITORIAL IN EL COMERCIO OF QUITO, AND TWO COLUMNISTS HAVE WRITTEN EDITORIAL COLUMNS. BY AND LARGE, THE MEDIA HAS EITHER IGNORED THE PRESIDENT'S FIRST MAJOR SPEECH ON LATIN AMERICA, OR MISINTERPRETED THE POINTS HE ATTEMPTED TO MAKE.

2. BOTH THE EL COMERCIO EDITORIAL STAFF AND BENJAMIN ORTIZ OF QUITO'S EL TIEMPO, THE COUNTRY'S MOST RESPECTED ECONOMIC WRITER, READ AN END TO TRADITIONAL ALLIANCES INTO THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH. BOTH CALLED FOR GREATER LATIN AMERICAN SOLIDARITY IN RESPONSE TO THIS US CALL FOR A GLOBAL SOLUTION TO ECONOMIC PROBLEMS; AS EL COMERCIO'S EDITORIAL SAID, "A LATIN AMERICAN POLICY MUST PROTECT LATIN AMERICA."

3. THE MEDIA VIEWPOINT, WHICH IN THIS CASE PROBABLY REFLECTS PUBLIC IF NOT OFFICIAL OPINION, IS INTERESTING IN THAT IT HEWS TO THE TRADITIONAL LINE OF LATIN AMERICAN ALLIANCE, IN SPITE OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THE FACT THAT ECUADOREAN FOREIGN POLICY ITSELF INCREASINGLY REFLECTS A GLOBAL RATHER THAN HEMISPHERIC OUTLOOK. THUS, ECUADOR SEEKS LIKE-MINDED ALLIES IN THE UN ON LOS MATTERS, HAS JOINED OPEC, AND IS ACTIVE IN THE GROUP OF 77 ON OVERALL ECONOMIC POLICY MATTERS. THIS DICHOTOMY IS NOT SURPRISING, HOWEVER, SINCE THE HEMISPHERIC (I.E., LATIN AMERICAN) UNITY CALL STILL HAS STRONG APPEAL, PARTICULARLY WHEN THE ISSUES INVOLVED APPARENT CON-

FRONTATION WITH THE US AND DO NOT AFFECT DOMESTIC INTERESTS.

4. AT THE SAME TIME, THE LIMITED REACTION MAY MERELY REFLECT THE FACT THAT ECUADOREANS ARE NOT ACCUSTOMED TO HEARING HEARD POLITICAL REALITIES WHEN THEY EXPECT MORE TRADITIONAL RHETORIC, PARTICULARLY ON PAN AMERICAN DAY. THERE HAVE ALSO BEEN COMPLAINTS THAT US POLICY CHANGES HAVE BEEN "TOO BRUSQUE" WITH THE NEW ADMINISTRATION, ALTHOUGH GENERALLY IN REFERENCE TO THE US STANCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS. IT IS POSSIBLE THE MEDIA AND INFORMED PUBLIC OPINION ARE STILL SEEKING A WAY TO DEVELOP A COHERENT PERCEPTION OF THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION.

5. THERE IS ALSO PRESENT HERE, HOWEVER, A CERTAIN HESITANCY IN PAYING A GREAT DEAL OF ATTENTION TO ANY PARTICULAR STATEMENT OF POLICY UNTIL SPECIFIC RESULTS BEGIN TO BE SEEN. AFTER TWO YEARS OF PROMISES FROM BOTH THE EXECUTIVE AND CONGRESS, THE GSP EXCLUSION OF ECUADOR REMAINS ON THE BOOKS, FOR EXAMPLE. AT THE SAME TIME, ECUADOR'S EXPERIENCE IN OPEC HAS NOT BEEN ENTIRELY FRUITFUL. IT IS PERHAPS LOGICAL TO SEE THE MEDIA ATTEMPTING TO WITHDRAW INTO A COCOON OF LATIN AMERICAN SOLIDARITY, FOR THAT IS WHERE THEY HAVE RECEIVED MOST OF THEIR RECENT SUPPORT. UNTIL ECUADOREANS ARE CONVINCED THAT US POLICY RHETORIC WILL BE TRANSLATED INTO BENEFITS FOR THEIR COUNTRY, WE CAN EXPECT CONTINUING SKEPTICISM-- IF NOT OUTRIGHT OPPOSITION--FROM THE LOCAL PRESS.
BLOOMFIELD

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